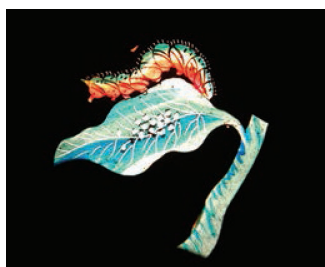
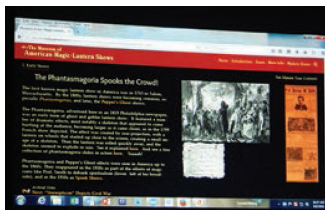
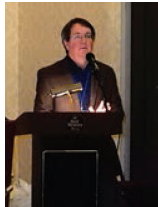


17th INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Mary Ann Auckland

On Friday 6 October the biennial Convention of the US and Canada Magic Lantern Society began in New Orleans on the theme of *Plantations, Wars, the Mississippi River and All That Jazz*. The three-day programme was packed with entertainment, erudition and variety.



After Chair **Ron Easterday** and organiser **Steve Barnes** welcomed everyone, **Dick Balzer** started proceedings on Longfellow's premise that 'music is the universal language of mankind'. The eccentric mixed-race band did include a stereotypical black banjo player with stripy trousers. Some slides make uncomfortable viewing now – like the 'blackberries' with black faces – but then would have raised a laugh.

Terry Borton gave a sneak preview of his online *Museum of American Magic-Lantern Shows*. **Adrian Kok** and **Else Flim** traced Charles Dickens's fascination for the magic lantern through his writing. **Janelle Blankenship** discussed projecting living plants, small animals and organisms on screen. Non-live images included a caterpillar turning into a butterfly and a chameleon with four colour changes – red, green, yellow and blue.

Unlike the *Steamship Natchez* still operating in New Orleans, early showboats were not self-powered. **Suzanne Wray** told the story of one example – *Buhoup's Great Floating Hindoo Pagoda*. This travelled up the Mississippi and other rivers, with varying success, until the musicians left a lit candle on a table that set fire to the boat in 1855.

Our Chairman **Jeremy** then gave some insights into Henry Morton, who gave scientific demonstrations at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia around the

same time as John Tyndall at the Royal Institution and John Henry Pepper at the Royal Polytechnic were in London. Morton gave his last lecture in 1872, perhaps fearing that his reputation as a scientist might be damaged by his penchant for showmanship.

Delegates then took a yellow 'School

Bus' to a wonderful show by the American Magic Lantern Theater – **Terry and Debbie Borton** with **Nancy Stewart** providing the music. Based on their Halloween Show, the many highlights included Edgar Allen Poe's *The Raven*, Jones's adventures trying to join a secret society, *The Specter Pig* with the

farmer ending up hanging from the same rope as had the pig, and Longfellow's *Evangeline*, much loved in Louisiana.

The next day **Sara Velas** introduced her Velaslavasay Panorama (see separate article) and **Ron Easterday** took us marching through Georgia with General Sherman's famous 'March to the Sea' in 1864, with the siege of Atlanta and the taking of Savannah ('a Christmas present for President Lincoln').

George Auckland outlined his projects with children – producing stories through Life Model photographic slides and a \$2 cardboard magic lantern. This was followed by **Else Flim** describing Charles Dickens's 1868 tour of the USA that attracted capacity audiences of up to 3,000 people. Mr Dickens himself (**Adrian**) then appeared and we were treated to part of the Dickens theater show (see cover article).

Next **Larry Rakow** presented *Alice in Wonderland* at the original speed of a slide about every two to three minutes. Then **Jeremy** presented a beautiful hand-painted set of slides, *The Fugitive Slaves*, sympathetic to the slave couple who, at the end, escape with the pursuing overseer providing lunch for an alligator. Unfortunately the English artist, Francis Frederick Theophilus Weekes, led a despicable private life and ended his career serving seven years in Dartmoor Prison.

The day ended with some exquisite song slides, with links to the South (Dixie days), from the Marnan Collection presented by **Margaret Bergh** and sung by **Sean Sharp**. The next day the Convention drew to a close with a truly magical show, *The Law of Reincarnation of an Old Fox*, performed by **Professor Mitsue Ikeda** and her students from Japan using moving lanterns and back-projected images. The dancing foxes were particularly beautiful. Following the auction and a visit to the Robert F. Fleschman Collection, plus the set of *NCIS: New Orleans*, the event came to a close.



13

